

Cable  
Text:

UNCLAS NASSAU 01359

SIPDIS  
CXNASSAU:

ACTION: ECON  
INFO: RSO CONS NAS AMB DCM POL

DISSEMINATION: ECON  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:DBHARDT  
DRAFTED: ECON:MPOGORZELSKI  
CLEARED: POL/ECON:DOCONNOR

VZCZCBHI062  
RR RUEHC RUCPDOC RUCNCOM  
DE RUEHBH #1359/01 3101813  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 061813Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4931  
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC  
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NASSAU 001359

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO USAID

E.O. 12958: B/A  
TAGS: [SOCI](#) [AMER](#) [ECON](#) [BF](#)  
SUBJECT: MAJOR BAHAMAS POPULATION CENTERS UNSCATHED BY TROPICAL  
STORM NOEL

1. Summary: While the worst of Tropical Storm Noel missed the major population centers of Nassau and Freeport, USAID- and Coast Guard-sponsored flights revealed substantial flooding on Long Island, Cat Island, Eleuthera, Acklins Islands and Exuma thirty-six hours after the storm had passed. The Government of the Bahamas does not plan to issue a disaster declaration at this time. Post coordination with Bahamian authorities went smoothly, as did Post preparations for the storm. End Summary.

Damage  
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2. A radio station employee who drowned in a pond was the only fatality from TS Noel in The Bahamas. Long Island (population 4000) experienced the highest level of rainfall, fifteen inches, and flood waters peaked at nine feet. Thirty-six hours after the storm, standing water continues to cover the majority of the island but only minimal numbers of people remain in shelters. Eleuthera, Abaco, Exuma, Cat Island and Acklins Islands also experienced flooding and damage from the storm. Nassau (New Providence) experienced flooding in some areas and intermittent power outages. Freeport experienced only moderate weather conditions.

Country Preparedness  
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3. The Bahamas National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) opened a command center early that was staffed continuously. Our USAID/OFDA risk management consultant (Beryl Ambrister) worked out of the NEMA command center to ensure close communication and coordination with GCOB authorities. Inter-island preparations were initially hampered because many Island Administrators were in Nassau for a conference and unable to return to their districts. Shelters were opened across the country, but most Bahamians chose to stay at home. One gas station in Nassau reported they sold 20,000 gallons of gas in one day. During their own preparations, Embassy Officers found that local grocery stores had adequate supplies, and building supply

centers had sandbags available just hours before the storm was due to hit. Local schools closed for October 31 and November 1, as did local government offices. On both days the streets were relatively empty of traffic.

#### Embassy Preparedness

¶4. The Embassy closed Wednesday and Thursday in anticipation of the storm. The storm's slow movement led to relatively calm weather on Wednesday morning, allowing key officers and the OIG team to work in the morning. Visa applicants were informed that they could come in Friday or the following week for their appointments. The Embassy's PD section issued a press release with information Tuesday afternoon. Post's Hurricane Action Committee (HAC) maintained contact with staff through phone, e-mail and radio updates. American citizens received warden messages. Post's Mission Disaster Relief Officer worked with NEMA and USAID Costa Rica throughout the storm. No USG-owned or -leased assets suffered serious damage.

#### Assistance

¶5. The GCOB does not plan to issue a disaster declaration at this time. The Prime Minister requested assistance with reconnaissance flights, which both Coast Guard District 7 and USAID/OFDA were able to provide. During the flights, the two agencies also evacuated two critically ill patients to Nassau for treatment. The GCOB does not anticipate it will make requests for additional assistance. Post is informally assisting the GCOB in locating an industrial sized sump-pump and crew to help clear water out of infrastructure centers in the Family Islands.

#### Economic Impact

¶6. There are no estimates for property damage at this time but Long Island will be the most affected. According to the Ministry of Tourism, nine scheduled cruises did not dock in Nassau, with an economic impact of approximately \$1.05 million. No major tourist facilities reported serious damage. Nassau's Lynden Pindling International Airport closed Wednesday afternoon and reopened Friday morning. Freeport (the other major port and airport) did not experience serious weather and the airport never closed. Several smaller island airports continue to be under standing water or open for emergency landings only.

#### Comment

¶7. Thankfully, the major population center of Nassau was relatively unscathed by Tropical Storm Noel. Nevertheless, the storm provided an opportunity for NEMA to mobilize its assets and stand-up its emergency operations center. Post and NEMA had the opportunity to test their communications capabilities as well. Overall, Post-NEMA cooperation went very smoothly. Close cooperation with NEMA allowed Post to have the most up-to-date information about local conditions, which was important for both assistance coordination and keeping the Embassy community informed. Post's radio network functioned effectively and sections maintained contact with their employees throughout the storm. During and after the storm the Coast Guard provided much appreciated assistance to the GCOB.

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